

News and Information

from the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs

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**Weekly Column by David McCollum, Director
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Have a Healthy Attitude About Health Clubs

If those holiday pounds are starting to show, you may be considering joining a health club to get back into shape. Before you charge up the Stairmaster, familiarize yourself with these consumer tips.

The Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs keeps a record of complaints filed against health clubs and other business. You should take time to investigate the health club you are considering. While there may have been dozens of available machines when you register on a Tuesday morning, that doesn't mean there won't be a packed house on Monday evenings when you want to work out. You should visit the health club during the hours you expect to use it.

After you've picked out the health club that's right for you, they'll want you to sign a contract. Before you sign, be certain that all agreements are in writing and you have read and understood everything in the contract. You are responsible for paying for the entire contract term, even if you stop using the health club. Most health clubs offer month-to-month agreements or trial memberships. Avoid long term contracts.

Some clubs offer discounts for paying in advance. While this may seem like a bargain, if the health club ceases operations, you will lose that money. It is best to avoid paying up front. If you have second thoughts about a health club, you should be aware that you have three days from the date of signing to cancel a health club contract. If you decide to cancel, you are required to notify the health club by certified mail.